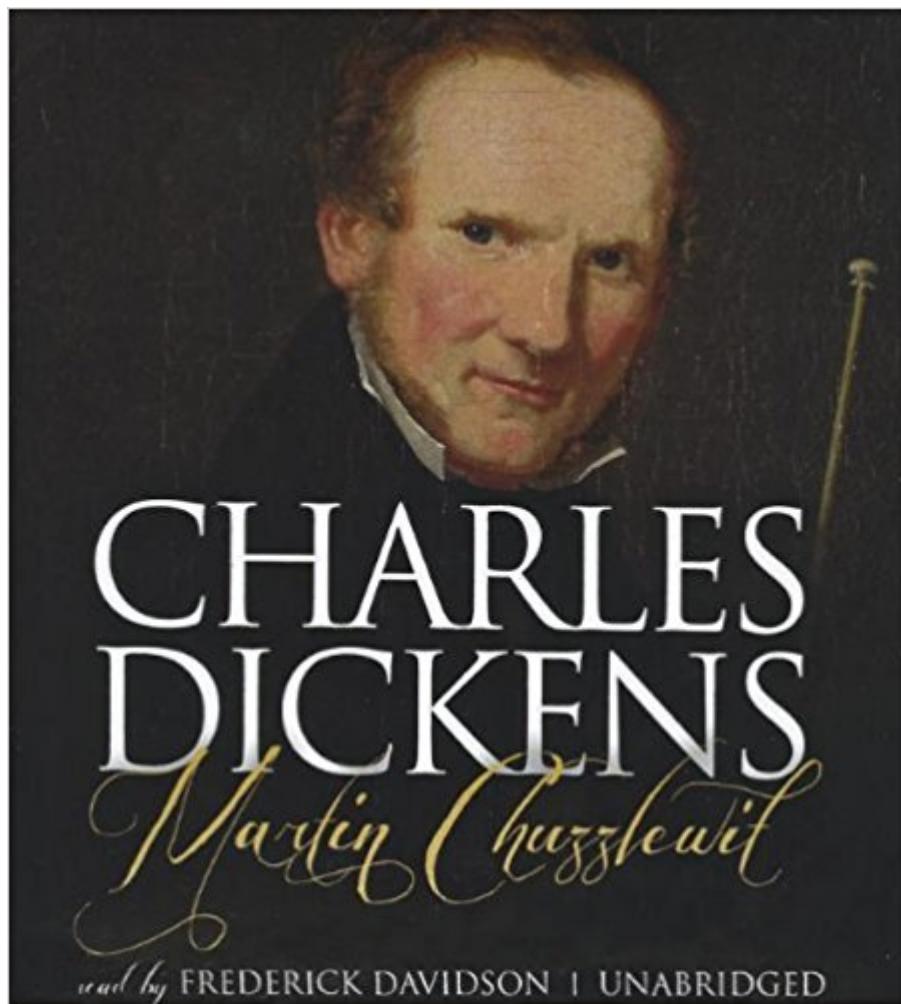


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Martin Chuzzlewit



Synopsis

[Read by Frederick Davidson] Wealthy and old, Martin Chuzzlewit, Sr., is surrounded by greedy relatives hoping to obtain a portion of his estate upon his death. Of his two descendants, one has the good fortune to transform his heritage of selfishness.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Martin Chuzzlewit is a dramatic serial on Masterpiece Theatre, a PBS television series presented by WGBH-TV, Boston, made possible by a grant from Mobil Corporation. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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unavailable edition of this title.

Wonderful reading by the late Frederick Davidson of a marvellous novel. Certain fine novelists came close to certain aspects of Dickensian style, such as Trollope and Collins, even Tolstoy, who was a great fan; but there was no one quite like Dickens. The benefit of hearing his novels read by either Davidson or the sublime Simon Vance, is that the reader can hear the different accents of British English, and American English too, in this particular book, which adds great depth and dimension to the characters. Highly recommended.

The most obvious feature of the book from the start is how long it is. And it is long for a reason. The dialogue of the many characters and the descriptions of the characters, the surroundings, environment, and emotions are seemingly never ceasing. I would take issue with the descriptions of America with regard to geography. The fictional location of Eden in the United States was impossible for me to imagine from the description of the trip and what awaited Mark and Martin. The characterizations of the political attitudes of America seemed sufficient. Still the plot seemed complicated enough for me to wonder where it led and to keep reading. I did get to the end and wondered why Dickens did not spend more time writing and developing the finish. As it is, I wished that I had given up about 50 pages earlier.

This, to date, is my least favorite Dickens novel (I only have 2 more to go to have read them all). Many of his books take a good while to have the story lines come together, for something to "happen." This one took nearly the entire length! It was a struggle to get through the endless pages of scenery descriptions and nonsensical monologues, which I often plowed through on the assumption that they would turn out to offer a clue or some other purpose, and which mostly turned out to be nothing but Dickens exercising his knack for description and dialog, to amuse himself. The scenes that took place in America were interesting for their insight into what the U.S. looked like in those days, especially to a foreigner (it looked mostly ridiculous!). Other than that, this novel was tedious.

I loved this story!! Yes, it seemed to drag at times, but since Dickens is always interesting, that did not matter. The many characters all had the resolutions of their various stories in the end, and the often hilarious depictions of the institutions of Law, Real Estate, Journalism, Medicine, Hospitality, Education leave the reader with a sense that not much has changed in almost two hundred years.

Deep goodness contrasted with greed and selfishness is a hallmark of the story, and all turns out well in the end, to the relief of this reader, at least.

1843 was the year that Dickens decided to explore the potential psychological changes that a person may undergo. In his well known classic "A Christmas Carol" we follow the life of his the author's tragic hero as he undergoes a life review, past, present and future. We, as readers, are caught up in this drama because of the constants that Dickens has shown in his earlier works; flowing descriptions, fast actions and dialogue, the quick dash to a moralistic ending and, lastly, the author's penchant for 'happily ever after' endings. This work was, and will remain, his classic work in the novella format. The other work that was done this year with a similar aim in mind was "Martin Chuzzlewit". Unfortunately, our renowned author was off the mark in this quest. While Scrooge's transformation was transparent through the spiritual visitations, old Martin's took place over an extended period of time and only done through the actions of his adopted girl, Mary, and done completely out of the reader's purview. This difference leads the first to seem as a natural part of an ongoing sequence whereas the second is awkward, lacks a reality base and requires the reader to totally shift his conclusion about the book title's character at the near finish of the novel. In 'A Christmas Carol' we have a wide variety of believable and endearing characters who show a vast array of positive human qualities. From the Crachits we see humble grace, from the nephew we find familial love, and from Fezziwig we find professional honor and grace. "Martin Chuzzlewit", on the other hand takes all these and other uplifting qualities of human life and places them in a single, awkward and less-than-handsome character known as Tom Finch. Yes, I realize that the author was simply pointing out that the true value of life's meaning can be found in the most unlikely of persons, but Dickens did it to such an extreme that it falls off the far side of the table called 'reality'. By overly saturating us with Tom and his virtues, the author's important character lesson quickly loses its credibility. Lastly, unlike the novella, the action in this 800+ page tome is very limited and/or non-existent. It reads more like a Victorian soap opera than it does like Dickens's more commanding and directive works. "The Pickwick Papers" and this work are the only two novels written by Dickens that appear as they were presented to his reading public; as a series of installments that occurred over a one year period. This, too, adds to the awkwardness of this book when taken as a whole. I have read "A Christmas Carol" numerous times and plan to do the same in the future. Although both this and "Martin Chuzzlewit" attempt to portray the same message, I do not see myself ever rereading the latter. It is far too cumbersome and lacks a firm thematic directive throughout.....

I rarely ever get to the place where I SIMPLY can't endure another page. This book wore me out after getting to the middle of the book, I dreaded reading another page of this overly dramatic, intensely described passages.

Since I had to select from 'predictable', 'some twists', and 'full of surprises' in preparing this review, I selected the last. The surprise? I downloaded this book three times - and each time, I got 'The Survivors of the Chancellor' by Jules Verne. Now, Verne was an excellent writer, and I enjoy his stories. But I really wanted a chance to read a Dickens story I hadn't encountered before. Perhaps I'll have better luck with another publisher...

A tale of betrayal, greed and murder. Martin must overcome being disinherited and swindled to wed his true love and reunite with his grandfather.

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